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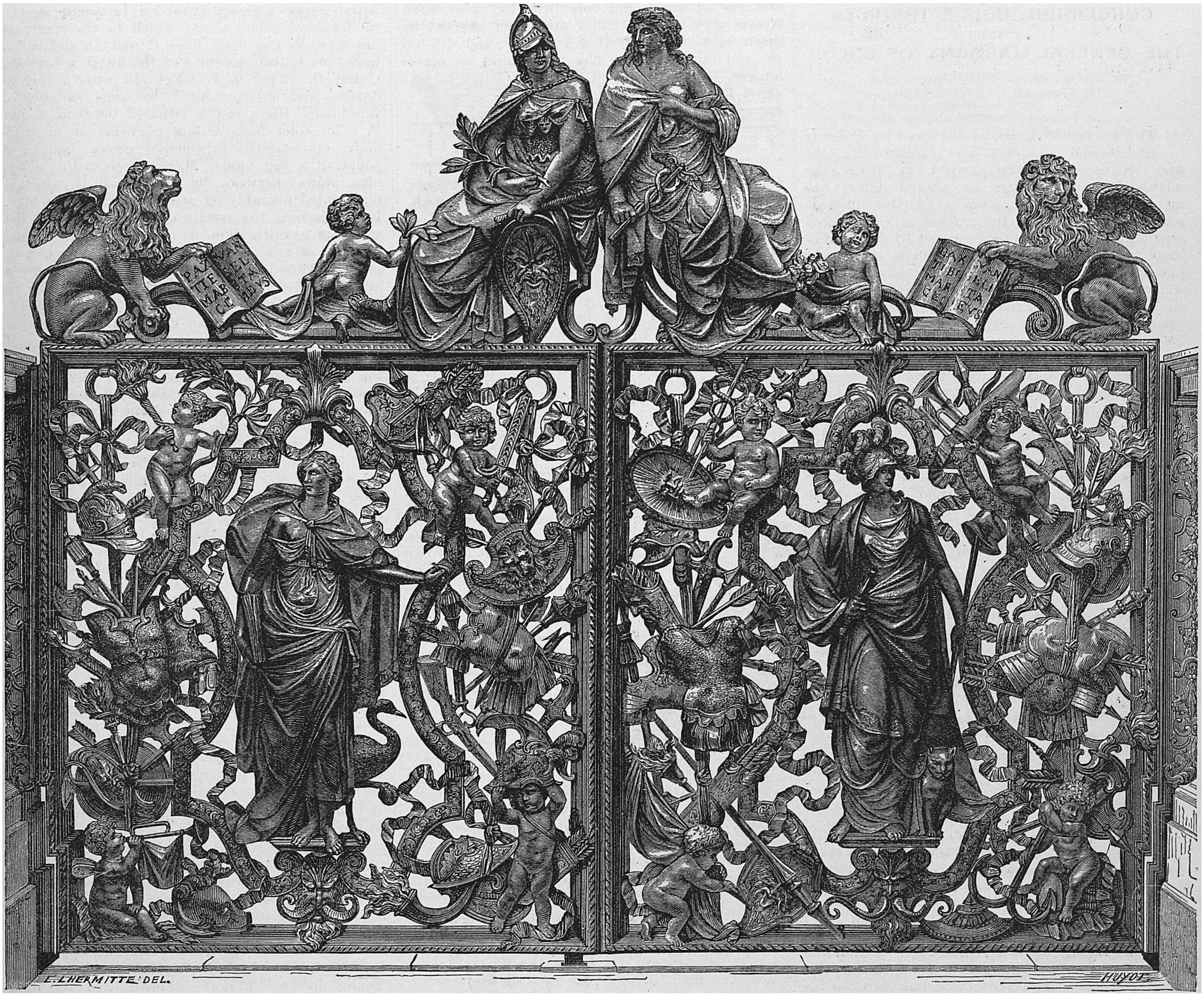

IRON GATE FROM THE LOGGIETTA, IN THE SQUARE OF ST. MARKS, VENICE.

Taken from "ART AND LETTERS."

PRACTICAL ADVICE FOR PAINTING ON PORCELAIN AND FAIËNCE.

Translated for THE DECORATOR AND FURNISHER from *Le Revue des Arts Decoratifs.*

IT may be well to introduce our subject by saying, the colors employed in painting on porcelain or on faiënce for enameling by heat, are composed of metalic oxides, more or less mixed by dissolving or melting them together, that they may adhere to the enamel, and give that gloss which is one of the first conditions desired in ceramic ornamentation. In the painting on faiënce for crude enamel, the metalic oxides are generally employed in a pure state, for then they are able to resist the highest temperature necessary. The color, in this case, is found under the enamel, and it is this that raises the tone of the surface by its own brilliancy. We find, already prepared colors that are mixed in the proper proportions, and although these are generally in an almost impalpable powder, it is necessary to pulverize them carefully before adding the essence. This pulverizing or mixing is done with a knife made either of a thin plate of flexable metal, or better still, of crystal.

Some years since they sold these colors for porcelain painting, put up in little metal tubes like the oil colors, of which they are the same consistency, ready to be employed by adding merely a small quantity of essence. Though these colors may be a very excellent quality, we prefer those in powder, which preserve more readily their freshness of tone, for the prepared colors seem to have the fault of drying too quickly in their tubes, and when they are not used at once are liable to lose much of their power. The powdered colors, of which there is considerable number for this sort of painting, should be preserved in little bottles with large openings and corked with care and labeled, being especially careful in covering that all air is excluded. When not kept in bottles the powders may, as is done in studios of painting at the manufacture of Sévres, be closed in paper in little packages such as those employed by druggists to put up powders. It is necessary to have a box calculated to preserve the powder and the porcelain palette, and having holes or little cups in more or less numbers, in which to deposit the colors after they have been ground in the essence of ordinary turpentine. When it is not intended to undertake a large work, it is easier to protect the little tubes in a box of white iron, which may be found at paint stores, and which contains a palette of ground glass, large enough to mix small quantities of color. It is well, nevertheless, to possess also a ground glass palette of larger dimensions, with several squares of heavy glass upon it, known in the trade under the name of "double glass." These squares of glass are useful to hold the colors that we wish to employ immediately after they have been mixed. The essences are of two sorts, the essence of ordinary turpentine, refined, and the essence of crude turpentine. Although these are found in the trade, it is very simple, and much more satisfactory, to reduce the crude turpentine to a pure state, ourselves. This can readily be done by placing a sufficient quantity of the turpentine in cups, and standing these upon a plate or saucer under a glass bell, the bell so raised as to permit a gentle circulation of air beneath it. If this be exposed to the sun, or during the winter to the mild temperature of a room warmed by a furnace, the evaporation leaves in the bottom of the cups, a thick, yellowish residue of the consistency of honey; this is the crude essence, perfectly pure and far preferable to any that can be bought. For convenience we preserve the essence, after being diluted, in a bottle, the neck closed by a cork, through which is passed a goose quill allowing the fluid to escape drop by drop.

For the crude essence, make use of a bottle with a large opening, closed equally by means of cork in which we have a piece of hard wood, generally a piece of the handle of a brush in ebony or beech, the end nearly touching the bottom of the bottle. It is well to put in the color but a small quantity of the crude essence, on account of accidents in firing, of which we will speak further on. The drops which adhere to the piece of wood when the cork is taken out, is sufficient, at least for ordinary mixtures.

To grind colors and to polish those that have been ground, we make use of a knife with an iron blade, supple and elastic, ending in the form of a long triangle; for colors which iron changes, such as the pure whites, the clear yellows, the carmines, and generally all the colors of gold, we should use, in preference, a knife of the same form, in horn or ivory.

The brushes of hair of badger or martin are of different forms and several thicknesses. It is well to have a certain number selected with care, supple and the point well shaped, and, of course, it is necessary to have them constantly in perfect order.

We further say, in advising neatness, that a primary condition of success in ceramic painting is freedom from dust, as the least grain leaves its traces after the baking.

Of ordinary brushes, there is a certain number which for water-coloring, there is a certain number which are necessary to the painting of porcelain, and which must be procured. Many are of heavy hair but of different thickness, intended to smooth the hues and equalize the colors. The hairs should be well trimmed, regular, not too long, and, above all, compact, so that none can escape from the handle. The brushes are of several forms, square, round, and spreading at the end like a flower; these last serve to equalize the tints in the concave surfaces on the feet of vases, or in molding.